

A competitive race

Sheriff's Department, county and public would benefit from a real match in 2014

LONG Beach Police Chief Jim McDonnell is reported to be considering a run for Los Angeles County sheriff, challenging longtime incumbent Lee Baca in 2014. Let us be the first to say publicly: Yes, please.

This is in no way an endorsement of any candidate. Instead, it's an endorsement of *something* — a competitive race for one of the nation's most important and highest-profile public-safety positions. It's been a long time since voters had that.

Of course, it would be a potential loss for the city of Long Beach. McDonnell is one of the state's most accomplished public-safety professionals, and a nice guy, too. But the problems in the Sheriff's Department affect residents of all of Los Angeles County.

Baca's leadership — more specifically, the lack of it — is at the root of the recent inmate-abuse scandal, in which deputies allegedly formed a jail gang and systematically abused inmates, and the violence by deputies outside the jails. Baca has taken steps, albeit slow and small ones, to address the public concerns. Last week came the announcement that seven deputies identified as ringleaders in a secret law enforcement club called the Jump Out Boys, whose members got matching tattoos and celebrated shootings, would

be fired.

But Baca's MO after the jail-abuse allegations emerged was to blame his command staff for not keeping him informed.

Is the septuagenarian still up to the task? Maybe, but it's a public discussion worth having in the next campaign.

McDonnell is certainly a credible threat to Baca. He worked for the Los Angeles Police Department for 30 years, becoming second-in-command to storied Chief Bill Bratton. As Bratton's operational chief, it's fair to say, McDonnell was the major force in the transformation of the LAPD from a troubled, scandal-ridden agency to a once again respected department.

McDonnell took over the top job at the Long Beach Police Department in March 2010 after he was passed over for chief when Bratton left. This was Long Beach's gain and L.A.'s loss. But his participation in the 2014 race would benefit everyone in L.A. County.

So let us say it again: Please run, Chief McDonnell.

McDonnell is certainly a credible threat to Baca. He worked for the Los Angeles Police Department for 30 years, becoming second-in-command to storied Chief Bill Bratton.

Swamped by child abuse data ^{2/18}

The Board of Supervisors wants a better reporting process. It's time to make that happen.

IN OCTOBER 2010, THE BOARD of Supervisors had a long and at times rancorous discussion about child deaths in Los Angeles County and realized that they really couldn't quantify problems or measure progress because there are so many county agencies that compile data in so many different ways. The Department of Children and Family Services, the coroner's office, the Interagency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect, the Children's Special Investigations Unit, the sheriff, the district attorney and the Commission for Children and Families all keep statistics on child deaths, each using its own criteria, each for its own purpose, each on its own timeline. Agencies privately scoffed at rivals' methodologies, reliability and agendas. The supervisors agreed that they needed a "single entity" to compile and maintain consistent and reliable numbers on child abuse, neglect and death.

A year later, in October 2011, there was still no single entity, and the board adopted another motion, this one requiring agencies to report back every three months on how to compile the information.

Now it is December 2012, and the board has on its Tuesday agenda a motion calling for a single entity to track the data.

No wonder county government has so little credibility on child welfare issues. A modern government, especially one charged with protecting children from abuse and neglect, must have consistent, reliable and transparent data. And to make actual use of the flurry of numbers and reports that come from many sources, it must have consistent and reliable leadership. The supervisors cannot expect to simply make a motion and then drop the issue because they don't want to deal with interagency rivalries or because they have moved on to other crises.

The supervisors have caught a break — there have been no high-profile reports recently of child deaths, so no emotional re-creations that often get in the way of thoughtful, reason-based progress. If they can't get this done now, it's hard to imagine when they will.

Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Michael D. Antonovich are right to bring forward their new motion calling for the county to get off the dime on the single entity and the proposed standardized protocols for reporting key child safety indicators. But they did that two years ago. Enough delay. The board should adopt this motion and be prepared to act on the report, now due Feb. 1 — or be able to explain why they failed one more time.

Sheriff to fire seven deputies who belong to secret clique

Thur 2-7-13 LA Times

'Jump Out Boys' wear the same tattoo and allegedly celebrate members' shootings.

By ROBERT FATURECHI

Seven Los Angeles County sheriff's deputies have been notified that the department intends to fire them for belonging to a secret law enforcement clique that allegedly celebrated shootings and branded its members with matching tattoos, officials said.

The Times reported last year about the existence of the clique, dubbed the Jump Out Boys, and the discovery of a pamphlet that described the group's creed, which required aggressive policing and awarded tattoo modifications for police shootings.

The seven worked on an

elite gang-enforcement team that patrols neighborhoods where violence is high. The team makes a priority of taking guns off the street, officials said.

The Sheriff's Department has a long history of secret cliques with members of the groups having reached high-ranking positions. Sheriff officials have sought to crack down on the groups, fearing they tarnished the department's reputation and encouraged unethical conduct.

In the case of the Jump Out Boys, sheriff's investigators did not uncover any criminal behavior. But, sources said, the group clashed with department policies and image.

Their tattoos, for instance, depicted an oversize skull with a wide, toothy grimace and glowing red eyes. A bandanna with the unit's acronym is wrapped around the skull. A bony hand clasps



THIS IMAGE is the design of the "Jump Out Boys" matching tattoo.

a revolver. Smoke would be tattooed over the gun's barrel for members who were involved in at least one shooting, officials said.

One member, who spoke to The Times and requested anonymity, said the group promoted only hard work and bravery. He dismissed concerns about the group's tattoo, noting that deputies throughout the department

get matching tattoos. He said there was nothing sinister about their creed or conduct. The deputy, who was notified of the department's intent to terminate him, read The Times several passages from the pamphlet, which he said supported proactive policing.

"We are alpha dogs who think and act like the wolf, but never become the wolf," one passage stated, comparing criminals to wolves. Another passage stated, "We are not afraid to get our hands dirty without any disgrace, dishonor or hesitation ... sometimes (members) need to do the things they don't want to in order to get where they want to be."

Department spokesman Steve Whitmore said starting the termination process shows that Sheriff Lee Baca "does not take any of this lightly and will move forward with the appropriate [See Deputies, AA2]

Sheriff to fire 7 members of clique

Thurs 2-7-13 LA Times

[Deputies, from AA1] action."

Investigators were less concerned about the tattoos, and more focused on the suspected admiration they showed for officer-involved shootings, which are expected to be events of last resort. The deputy told The Times, however, that investigators reviewed their shootings and arrests and found nothing unlawful.

"We get called a gang

within the badge? It's unfair," he said. "People want to say you have a tattoo. So do fraternities. Go to Yale. Are they a gang?... Boy Scouts have patches and they have mission statements, and so do we."

"We do not glorify shootings," he continued. "What we do is commend and honor the shootings. I have to remember them because it can happen any time, any day. I don't want to forget them because I'm glad I'm alive."

If the firings are upheld, it would be one of the largest terminations over one incident in the department's history. In 2011, the department fired about half a dozen deputies who were also said to have formed a clique. Those deputies worked on the third floor of Men's Central Jail and allegedly threw gang-like three-finger hand signs. They were fired after they fought two fellow deputies at an employee Christmas party and allegedly punched a female deputy.

As part of the widening federal investigation of the Sheriff's Department, a criminal grand jury recently subpoenaed the agency for

materials relating to deputy cliques, specifically citing several of the groups including the "3000 boys" and the Jump Out Boys.

When the pamphlet revealing the existence of the Jump Out Boys was initially found, officials didn't know if the group was real. But eventually, one member

came forward and named the others, said an official who asked for anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

The seven deputies can fight the department's decision to fire them.

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Real reform of L.A.'s jails

2/1

FOR MONTHS, Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca has been under mounting pressure to address abuse and misconduct in the jails he oversees. Faced with news reports and the recommendations of a special commission, he pledged to institute reforms and fix the problems that have occurred on his watch, and yet his actions remain halting and inconclusive.

Last week, there was some movement. Baca submitted Terri McDonald's name to the county Board of Supervisors as his choice to serve as the new assistant sheriff for the custody division. If appointed, McDonald, who is currently the undersecretary of rehabilitation at the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, will have the most important role in determining whether real and meaningful changes are made in the jails, or whether it is business as usual. In order to demonstrate a commitment to progress, over the next three months, she should:

Finish installing cameras in all the jails and make sure they are fully functioning. This will serve to deter unnecessary use of force by deputies and assist in the investigation of such incidents.

Upgrade the computerized system used to track inmate complaints against deputies as well use-of-force incidents. The Los Angeles Police Department, after much foot-dragging, modernized its system and

now monitors its officers more effectively and comprehensively.

Create a separate career track for deputies who want to work in the jails rather than moving them to the field. This won't be easy and will require negotiation with union leaders. But at the very least, she can establish a training program for new jailers, the first step toward ending the department's long reliance on the jails as an unwanted training ground for deputies who hope to work elsewhere.

Demonstrate her resolve on discipline. The assistant sheriff should hold captains accountable for the investigation of subordinates, and she needs to personally involve herself in reviewing incidents that involve injuries. She must be a forceful advocate for enhanced penalties when deputies are found guilty of dishonesty or abuse, and must push Baca to transfer or discipline those who violate the rules.

Adopt a rotation policy that will help break up cliques of deputies. That policy should also ensure that new jailers aren't immediately placed in dangerous units.

These are not abstract ambitions. They are measurable, short-term fixes that are badly overdue. If McDonald achieves them, she and Baca may justifiably be credited with tackling some of the system's most serious issues. If not, they will invite the argument that Baca's commitment is insincere and his office better suited to someone else.

Take guns from fired cops

Dorner is another 'law-abiding' citizen who turned violent

GEORGE SKELTON
FROM SACRAMENTO

Here's an idea for a new gun control law: How about immediately seizing the personal arsenal of a fired cop?



Dishonorably discharged soldiers, after all, aren't allowed to own firearms. Why should dishonored cops?

Like booted officer Christopher Jordan Dorner, who allegedly went on a vengeful killing rampage four years after being fired from the Los Angeles Police Department.

Maybe, at least, Dorner should have been required to undergo psychological testing upon being sacked to determine whether he was mentally fit to own weapons.

True, there may be a constitutional problem with that idea. He's still a citizen, presumably with a 2nd Amendment right to keep and bear arms. That doubtless would be the argument of gun-rights groups.

He wasn't convicted of a crime. If we're going to confiscate the weapons of an axed cop or subject him to psychological testing, shouldn't we also take that precaution with, say, a fired fast-food burger-flipper?

Well, no, there's a difference: We expect and demand more from police, who have been trained at public expense to be expert killers.

legally buy guns?' they laugh and say, 'Of course not.' But a large segment of the population has a criminal record and can still buy guns."

Especially under federal law. Less so under California law.

Wintemute, an emergency room doctor who has been researching gun violence for three decades, refers to one category of firearms owner as "not so law-abiding." These are people who have committed misdemeanors, but still are allowed to own guns.

"Under federal law, if I assault my intimate partner, I'm prohibited [from possessing a gun] for life," he says. "But I can beat you up and nothing happens. I can have any number of convictions for violent misdemeanors — assault and battery, brandishing a firearm in a threatening way — and can buy as many guns as I want."

"California is different. California almost uniquely bans possession for anyone who has been convicted of a violent misdemeanor."

A national study of prisoners convicted of a firearms-related felony found that 60% were not legally barred under federal law from owning a gun when they committed their crime, Wintemute says.

If California's tighter gun-eligibility rules were applied, however, only around a third of the criminals would have been legal gun owners.

Just because the law

allows these creeps to keep and bear arms, does that make them "law-abiding"? You might think so by listening to the gun lobby.

But crime records don't seem to matter to the NRA. It's fighting expanded background checks that might turn up red flags on gun buyers. Criminals would avoid background checking, LaPierre asserts, and law-abiders would be inconvenienced.

"The evidence is that these people [with criminal records] are a much greater risk for committing a future crime than the truly law-abiding gun owners," Wintemute says.

"The question for us and the rest of the nation is, are we OK with that?"

Clearly we're allowing too many people to buy and possess guns — characters who, by almost any logical criteria, should not be armed.

"I grew up around guns," Wintemute says. "I was a member of the Rifle and Pistol Club at UC Davis. I'm not anti-gun. I'm anti-what guns can do...."

"Nobody thinks that any one policy is going to take care of the entire problem. But, for most people, denying a gun purchase works."

The two most important steps Wintemute would take, he says, would be to prohibit alcohol abusers from owning guns and to confiscate the roughly 39,000 weapons currently possessed by about 20,000 Californians legally barred from holding them.

"It's a huge gap in our current regulation," Wintemute says of the liquor laxity. "There is solid evidence — it's not a matter of dispute — that alcohol abuse is a risk factor for committing violence."

One bill proposed in the Legislature last week would prohibit gun ownership for anyone convicted twice of driving under the influence.

Another measure, co-written by Senate leader Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento) and budget Chairman Mark Leno (D-San Francisco) would appropriate the \$20 million-plus needed to seize the illegally held weapons.

There was a heavy volley of gun control proposals — some good, some goofy.

The good: Ban possession — not just the sale — of ammunition magazines holding more than 10 rounds. That probably would necessitate an expensive government buy-back.

Also introduced: A requirement that all new semiautomatic rifles come with fixed magazines. No detachables.

The goofy: Requiring all gun owners to buy liability insurance. A boon for insurers and a ludicrous burden for someone who hasn't shot Grandpa's old shotgun in 40 years.

But really goofy: The idea that an angry, deeply disturbed fired cop was deemed fit to own guns.

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Monday 2-11-73 LA Times Did Beck weight the scale?

By Hector Villagra

WHenever there is an officer-involved shooting, we are reflexively asked to withhold judgment until all the evidence comes out. So it is somewhat disconcerting for LAPD Chief Charlie Beck, in providing the first detailed account of the shooting of Margie Carranza and Emma Hernandez in Torrance, to tell *The Times* in an interview that they were the victims of "a tragic misinterpretation" by officers working under "incredible tension."

We all know the officers made a mistake, or a series of them, as the manhunt for Christopher Jordan Dornier unfolded Thursday, but the question is whether their behavior was excusable or not, and whether additional training or even punishment is warranted for the officers, and whether new or better policies and training are needed for all officers. When Beck says that it's not difficult to imagine how officers who were already on edge could make the mistake these officers did, even if he is not commenting directly on this shooting, he risks suggesting that he has prejudged their behavior as excusable, a suggestion that is particularly troubling for those

who live in communities where officer-involved shootings happen regularly.

The public has a right to a full and impartial investigation and an accounting of what happened before judgment is rendered. That's a basic, first principle, and Beck should do nothing to suggest any deviation from it.

As Beck acknowledged, the investigation that will attempt to provide this accounting is still in its early stages. Investigators have yet to collect all the evidence and piece together what happened.

The public has yet to be told basic facts: the number of officers involved, the kind of weapons they used, the number of bullets fired, the kind of verbal warnings, if any, provided before they opened fire, and whether the officers remain on active duty. The public has yet to be told, more fundamentally, how officers could open fire on a vehicle that didn't match the make, color or license plate of the vehicle driven by Christopher Dornier.

We know, in general, that law enforcement officers face many dangerous and stressful situations in the line of duty. Here, the officers, guarding the home of a high-ranking LAPD police official, and on the lookout for Dornier, faced a stressful situa-

tion when told he might be heading their way. But how did this stress so cloud their judgment that they opened fire mistakenly, spraying surrounding houses and cars with bullets, and what does this say about the training officers receive to handle the duress of being thrust into a potentially life-threatening situation and to still make critical decisions?

Before the facts have been gathered, and the relevant questions answered, Beck must resist the urge to put his thumb on the scale of public opinion. It is natural that he should want to support his officers and department, but his leadership now, as a public official, is what's most important. When it comes to this shooting, he must be focused single-mindedly on promising and delivering a timely and thorough investigation that provides full disclosure and permits public scrutiny and accountability.

We are a long way from a department and a chief who would defiantly circle the wagons and deny any and all wrongdoing, but Beck risks damaging those gains by creating the impression that public relations in any way could take precedence over public accountability. The decision to use deadly force is the most critical one that a law enforcement officer will ever

make, and the department's investigation into that decision must be treated as the most important the department will ever undertake. Any failure in this regard would confirm the worst suspicions of those who remain unconvinced that the department has truly reformed itself.

Beck and his predecessor have worked to allay many of the fears and anxieties that Los Angeles citizens experienced about the Police Department during the terrible decades when the LAPD functioned as a paramilitary force and treated our most vulnerable communities as the enemy. Beck has done this by insisting on the unvarnished truth as part of implementing policies he correctly characterizes as "constitutional policing." Now, in this moment of heightened scrutiny, is the time to reaffirm this commitment.

HECTOR VILLAGRA is executive director of the ACLU of Southern California.

HOW TO WRITE TO US

Please send letters to letters@latimes.com. For submission guidelines, see latimes.com/letters or call 1-800-LA TIMES, ext. 74511.

Deputy who is Baca's nephew faces probe in inmate abuse

[Nephew, from A1] hired."

Baca and Bravo, 32, declined to be interviewed. Bravo has been relieved of duty with pay in connection with the criminal probe.

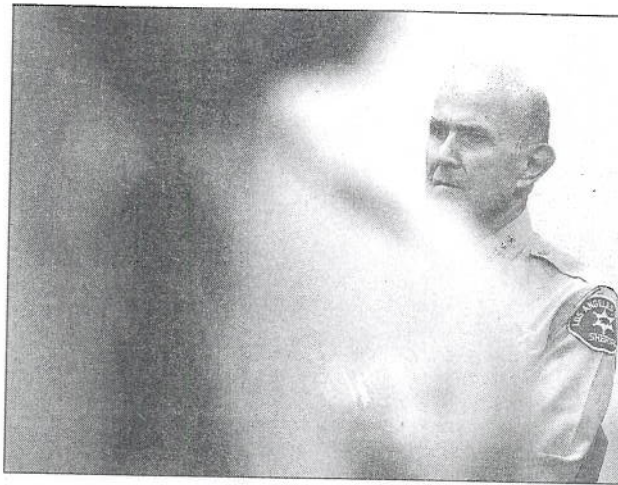
This isn't the first time that the hiring of an applicant with ties to a top sheriff's official has drawn scrutiny. Last year, *The Times* reported that the son of the undersheriff's secretary was hired as a security guard despite a history of theft, dishonesty, liaisons with prostitutes and as many as 100 domestic violence incidents. When he applied for the job, he was still on probation for punching a man unconscious.

In 2011, *The Times* reported that a recruit with ties to Baca's son was hired during a hiring freeze for rookie deputies.

Baca's spokesman, Steve Whitmore, said the sheriff was unaware of his nephew's past and played no role in the decision to hire him in 2007. After inquiries from *The Times*, Baca asked the department's official watchdog and internal investigators to review Bravo's history to determine whether sheriff's employees gave him special treatment.

Personnel records reviewed by *The Times* show that for years Baca's department has operated a special hiring track for friends and relatives of department employees. The program was called FOS, or "Friends of the Sheriff," but is now operated under a different name, sources said. In 2009, the sheriff's watchdog reviewed the hiring practice, calling the name "unfortunate," but concluded that there was no evidence that those hired through the special track "routinely received preferential treatment during the background investigation process."

At the time, the Office of Independent Review also said that the sheriff "knows virtually none of the individuals on the list" — that



LUIS SINCO Los Angeles Times

SHERIFF LEE BACA did not know about his nephew's past brushes with the law, his spokesman said.

'There is no way he should have been hired.'

— **MICHAEL GENNACO**, lead attorney for the Sheriff's Department watchdog agency, on the 2007 hiring of Baca nephew Justin Bravo

the list "might more aptly be titled 'Applicants Who Know Someone on the Sheriff's Department.'"

In a recent interview, Gennaco argued that having a separate hiring track for people who know sheriff's officials actually helps prevent special treatment. After an FOS applicant's background is investigated, he said, a final hiring decision is made by a special panel of commanders who are not informed of the applicant's identity.

An internal sheriff's spreadsheet reviewed by *The Times* shows Bravo was an FOS candidate, listed as "Sheriff Baca's nephew" and noted as having a "459 arrest" — penal code for burglary — along with "DUI arrest, fight w/San Diego PD and theft."

"The sheriff didn't know anything about this," Whitmore said.

Though Whitmore declined to discuss those allegations of misconduct in detail, he said "most of it occurred, if not all, while he was in the Marine Corps." Military disciplinary records are not public, and *The Times* could not find court records indicating Bravo was charged. Whitmore said that arrests alone, without convictions, would not necessarily disqualify a job candidate.

The sheriff's hiring rules give officials wide discretion. Some experts have said they allow for too much leeway, especially when it comes to evaluating serious misconduct such as lying, stealing and violence.

Concerns about Bravo's conduct began early in his career. Retired sheriff's Cmdr. Robert Olmsted told *The Times* that in about 2009, a sergeant caught Bravo looking at inappropriate material on a jailhouse computer. When confronted, Bravo yelled at the sergeant to mind his own business, Olmsted said. About a month later, Olmsted said, Bravo went to an off-duty party, where he ripped another deputy's shirt pocket and fought with him. As he was being escorted out of the party, Olmsted said, Bravo was caught on tape acting belligerently and banging on

countertops.

Anthony Brown, an FBI inmate informant, has told *The Times* that Bravo once smuggled him a cellphone behind bars — a claim spokesman said sheriff's detectives investigated but could not substantiate. In 2011, Brown was smuggled a cellphone by a deputy who didn't realize Brown was secretly helping with the ongoing federal probe of the jails. Brown said he used that phone to communicate with his FBI handler on the outside. The transaction led to a bribery conviction against that deputy.

In an interview with *The Times*, Brown said that before he got that phone, another cellphone was smuggled to him by a second deputy: Bravo. He said that before the handoff, Bravo stripped him naked to make sure he wasn't wearing a wire. Brown's work has helped secure the conviction of one deputy; however, court files and interviews reveal that he has previously made false allegations.

FBI agents investigating jailhouse misconduct have recently asked potential witnesses what they knew about Bravo, according to sources.

An FBI spokeswoman declined to comment.

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Times staff writer Jack Leonard contributed to this report.

But never mind.
Dorner seemingly was
law-abiding — until he
wasn't.

And that brings up a
larger point: At minimum,
he is another example of a
so-called law-abiding, in-
nocent gun owner who
apparently went berserk
and used his arsenal to kill
people.

It makes such comments
as this one recently uttered
by National Rifle Assn.
executive Wayne LaPierre
look particularly inane and
off target: "Law-abiding gun
owners will not accept
blame for the acts of violent
or deranged criminals."

News flash: Some law-
abiders do become violent
criminals. And their kill rate
too often increases with
their firepower.

Of course, this gets into
the whole definition of "law-
abiding." Unfortunately, you
don't need to be exactly
law-abiding to legally pur-
chase a gun.

"It's one of the really
pervasive myths," says
Garen Wintemute, director
of the UC Davis Violence
Prevention Research Pro-
gram. "If you ask people the
question 'Can criminals

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LA Times
WED 2-13-13

Probe sought into sale of vests

BY JACK LEONARD AND
ROBERT FATURECHI

Local officials Tuesday called for investigations into the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department funneling hundreds of bullet-proof vests to Cambodia through the city of Gardena.

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas requested an audit to determine whether officials violated the law in shipping the vests a decade ago to the Southeast Asian country. A Gardena official also said she would be asking for an investigation into her city being used as an intermediary for the unusual transaction.

The announcements Tuesday were prompted by a Times investigation published over the weekend that found that sheriff's ballistic vests were shipped to Cambodia and not declared to customs officials, as required by federal law. In-

[See Vests, AA5]

Probe sought of sale of vests to Cambodia

[Vests, from AA1]

Instead, they were stuffed inside one of a number of passenger cars that the Sheriff's Department was shipping directly to Cambodia, avoiding the rigorous vetting process the U.S. government requires to prevent body armor from getting into the wrong hands abroad.

Sheriff's media representatives gave *The Times* differing accounts about the transaction, initially denying any sheriff's officials were involved in sending the vests to Cambodia, then offering explanations contradicted by records and interviews. The officials involved in the transaction refused to discuss it.

"Federal, state and local statutory, legal and policy violations may have occurred with these transactions," read a motion by Ridley-Thomas.

Gardena Mayor Pro Tem Rachel Johnson said she was troubled by the alleged role that the city's mayor, Paul Tanaka, played in the sales. Tanaka is the second-in-command at the Sheriff's Department.

She said she also wanted to know why her city manager approved the transaction. Records showed the city manager pledged under the penalty of perjury that the vests were intended for Gardena, despite later telling federal authorities he knew they would be diverted to Cambodia. "I'm concerned about the appearance of a cover-up," Johnson said in an interview with *The Times*.

It is not unusual for U.S. law enforcement agencies to donate used or obsolete equipment to other departments, including foreign ones. But in this case, the vests were shipped using an intermediary and were not declared on their way out of the country. The vests were ostensibly sold to Gardena, but were never claimed by the city before being shipped to Cambodia.

The U.S. Customs Service launched an investigation

tion into the sale of the vests in 2002, and federal agents were told that the transactions were coordinated by Tanaka, according to records obtained by *The Times*. A sheriff's spokesman called Tanaka's role minimal, saying it was a former undersheriff who called the Gardena city manager to coordinate the sales.

Customs agents decided not to seek criminal charges, concluding that there wasn't enough evidence to show that anyone involved in the transactions knew the relevant export laws. One expert told *The Times* that that rationale was "curious" because authorities don't have to prove knowledge of the law to press charges.

After closing the case, federal authorities referred the matter to sheriff's investigators, but the department did not conduct its own investigation. But a sheriff's spokesman said the department did nothing wrong and sent the vests through Gardena because they were under the mistaken impression that county rules prevented them from dealing directly with foreign nations.

Prompted by *The Times* inquiry, Sheriff Lee Baca asked the county auditor-controller's office to examine the sale, and Baca's spokesman called that review "a complete vindication." But Baca told the auditor-controller only that the vests were sold to Gardena, not that Gardena was a go-between to get the vests to Cambodia.

The audit Ridley-Thomas proposed would include that, and determine if any sheriff's or Gardena officials committed "any fraudulent or illegal activity."

Johnson, who is running to replace Tanaka as mayor of Gardena, said she was a city clerk at the time of the transactions and never knew about them.

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